

REMARKS

The present amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action dated February 4, 2004, which set a three-month period for response, making this amendment due by May 4, 2004.

Claims 18-21 are pending in this application.

In the Office Action, the Examiner requested that the Applicants' cross reference information should include reference to the issuance of the parent application as a patent. Claims 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,192,551 to Appel. Claims 16 and 17 were further rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of U.S. Patent No. 6,161,248.

In the present amendment, the specification was amended to add the reference to the parent application, now issued as a patent.

To more clearly define the present invention over the cited references and to address the double-patenting rejection, claims 16-17 have been canceled, and new claims 18-21 have been added.

New claim 18 defines that the connection device has at least one thickening, which engages in at least one recess of the carrying element, and thereby secures the connection device against axial displacement relative to the carrying element. This thickening cannot be equated with the rivets, used by Appel to secure his connection device.

The connection device of the present invention has elastic means, with which it is secured to the carrying element. By means of the combination of the elastic means on the one hand and the thickening on the other hand, a simple assembly of the connection device on the carrying element is made possible. Such a simple assembly is not possible with the Appel device.

When the connection device has its own elasticity, for example, based on its structure or its material, the thickening can be guided into the corresponding recess, without requiring a separate, elastic tongue. Thus, this feature is only covered as a limitation in new claim 19.

Appel fails to disclose or suggest at least this one feature described above with reference to new claim 18. Therefore, claim 18 is not anticipated by this reference. Anticipation requires the presence in a single prior art reference disclosure of each and every element of the claimed invention, arranged as in the claim. ***Lindemann Maschinenfabrik GmbH v. American Hoist & Derrick Co.***, 221 USPQ 481, 485 (Fed. Cir. 1984).

In addition, new claim 18 cannot be viewed as obvious over the Appel reference, since Appel fails to suggest the above features of claim 18. When establishing obviousness under Section 103, it is not pertinent whether the prior art device possess the function characteristics of the claimed invention, if the reference does not describe or suggest its structure. ***In re Mills***, 16 USPQ 2d 1430, 1432-33 (Fed. Cir. 1990).

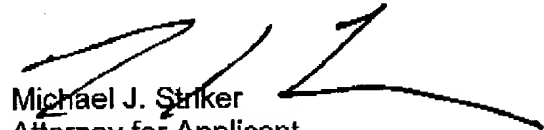
For the reasons set forth above, the Applicants respectfully submit that new claims 18-21 are patentable over the cited art. The Applicants further

request withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102 and reconsideration of the claims as herein amended.

In light of the foregoing amendments and arguments in support of patentability, the Applicants respectfully submit that this application stands in condition for allowance. Action to this end is courteously solicited.

Should the Examiner have any further comments or suggestions, the undersigned would very much welcome a telephone call in order to discuss appropriate claim language that will place the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,



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